in a foreign country involves the extradition court and other authorities, which often prolongs the process.

(c) and (d) The Government constantly pursue extradition cases with the concerned foreign Governments and intervene at appropriate diplomatic level from time to time for early conclusion of extradition proceedings.

Agreement on sale of Uranium

†1462. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Australia has imposed condition of signature by India on NPT for the sale of Uranium turning down the earlier agreement regarding sale of uranium to India;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(c) the steps taken by Government for receiving support of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG); and

(d) the steps being taken by Government for alternative arrangements for the supply of Uranium?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) There has been no agreement with Australia regarding sale of Uranium to India.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) As per the Joint Statement of July 18, 2005, the United States has committed to work with its friends and allies to adjust international regimes to enable full civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India. Government have also taken steps to seek the support of NSG countries. This has been done through briefings in NSG member country capitals and in New Delhi as welll as in dialogue with the NSG. The issue of an India-specific exemption to the NSG Guidelines has also been taken up at political levels during visits abroad as well as incoming visits. Once the NSG decides on an appropriate India-specific exemption, it would be possible to discuss alternative arrangements for supply of Uranium.

Blockade of Gaza Strip

1463. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware about the fact that Israel for a long period has made blockade of Gaza Strip;

(b) if so, the reasons for Government maintaining a silence over the Israel's occupation and blockade of Gaza Strip violating all international and humanitarian norms; and

(c) when is Government going to demand an end to the blockade of the Gaza Strip and call for an urgent Security Council session to discuss the issue?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) Government have been closely monitoring the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip. The matter has been the subject of an exchange of notes between the Foreign Minister of Egypt and the Minister of External Affairs. Government have also issued statements on the matter on January 18, 2008, February 11, 2008, March 1, 2008 and March 7, 2008. The subject was also touched upon in the *suo motu* statement of the Minister of External Affairs made in both Houses of Parliament on March 3, 2008. In the statements, Government have condemned the escalation of violence on all sides, urged restraint and expressed India's readiness to assist, including on the humanitarian aspects, in order to relieve the sufferings of the Palestinian people. Government remain engaged on the subject.

Indian workers in Dubai jail

1464. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government is aware that 45 Indian workers who protested against low salaries have been jailed by a Dubai Court;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter; and

(c) the steps taken by the Central Government for the release of these Indian workers from jail?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) 42 Indian workers who were involved in violence during a strike in November 2007 were arrested by the police and charged with breaching local laws. The Dubai court of first instance sentenced them on 21/02/2008 for 6 months in jail followed by deportation for engaging in violence during a labour strike.

(c) Indian Consulate officials visited the Dubai central jail on 26/02/08 and interacted with some of the 42 Indian workers about their conditions in jail as well as any legal assistance required by them to go on appeal against the judgment. The workers informed that their living conditions in jail were good and that they have confessed in court about damaging the properties of the company during the strike and protest. The workers conveyed that after standard remission, their sentence period would be getting over by March 2008 and they would like to return to India.

Crisis in Gaza Strip

1465. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip on account of blockade of Gaza by Israel;